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Catalpa Leaf Spot

The catalpa tree is valued as a shade tree particularly for its generous crown of large and shapely leaves with their pleasing shade of green. Any trouble which affects the catalpa foliage lessens at once the special glory of this tree. The leaf-spot diseases of the catalpa therefore are of unusual significance.

Although there are probably at least two fungi concerned in causing these brown, dead areas on the leaves the spots are so similar in appearance and so like in nature that for practical purposes they may be considered as one trouble. The spots produced are usually rounded in outline, about the size of a lead pencil in diameter, and brown or dark brown in color. When present in small numbers leaf spots appear to have but little effect on the rest of the leaf tissue but when they become numerous the affected leaves are likley to become distorted and turn yellow and fall early.

The fungus parasite is thought to winter over on the fallen leaves and it is spores drifting in air currents from these to the new foliage in spring which start leaf spot infections in the current year's leaves. For this reason, it is recommended that all catalpa leaves be raked up in fall and burned, buried or carted away out of reach, especially if the trees have been affected by leaf spot troubles. Even in bad cases of leaf spot this practice is beneficial and in most cases it may be counted on to reduce infection to a negligible amount if continued for a couple of years.

Spraying is also beneficial, but since it takes time and labor and disfigures the leaves almost as much as the fungus does, it is not recommended except as a last resort. Beginning when the first leaves are fully formed, a weak Bordeaux (3-4-50) may be applied two or three times at two to three weeks intervals, depending on the weather and amount of disease. In most cases careful attention to disposal of old leaves will give sufficient control without spraying.

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